

# Comma Rules



## Reason 1: Because they give clarity

The man collected many items: gold, paper, cars, socks, and nails.

The man collected many items: gold paper, cars, socks, and nails.

## Reason 2: Between independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction

**Conjunctions:** for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

The mayor gave a speech, and reporters asked questions.

The telephone rang several times, but no one answered it.

**FANBOYS**



## Or after dependent clauses with a subordinating conjunction

After the first snowflakes, we all got excited.

Because the roads were slick, Mary drove carefully.

\*no comma when subordinate conjunction follows the main clause:

Mary drove carefully because the roads were slick.

◆ Sparky, who is hyperactive, ate his bone.

**Note:** be careful with: who and which.  
  
Removing restrictive modifiers affects the meaning of a sentence. However, removing a non-restrictive modifier does not affect the meaning of a sentence, but important added information is lost. Therefore, non-restrictives need commas.

## Reason 3: After introductory expressions and transitions

According to Tammy Bass, the truth will set you free.

In the past, the economy has changed.

Therefore, it is important to respond instead of react.

## Reason 4: Before and after interrupting and adding expressions

This is Greg Nelson, my cousin from

Atlanta. Cecelia put the plant, a cactus, on

the table.

**Some Subordinate Conjunctions: Whines About**

- WH** – when, whenever, where, wherever, while
- I** – if, in case
- N** – now that
- E** – even though, even if
- S** – since, so that
- A** – after, although,
- as **B** – because,
- before **O** – only if
- U** – unless, until
- T** – than, though

## Comma Rules



### Reason 5: Lists and Series

The shirt is red, white, and blue.

We watched the heavy, pounding rain during the storm.

### Reason 6: With dates, numbers, addresses, & letters

Laura was born on May 29, 1980, in Canton, Ohio.

Very sincerely yours,

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

### Reason 7: With quotations

Maria replied, "This is my jacket."

"That is what happened," replied Tran.

### Reason 8: Before or surrounding the name or title of a person directly addressed.

Alisha, will you help with the

party? Yes, doctor, I will.

Mow the lawn, Dennis, before it rains.

